AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1, 2, 4-11 and 14-26 without prejudice.

Claims 1-11. (Cancelled)

12. (Previously Presented): A moving picture encoding apparatus for encoding successive input image signals, comprising:

block significance determining means for determining block significance for each block as an encoding unit of the input image signals according to predetermined evaluation indices;

map generating means for generating, according to the block significance, a refresh map signal representing priority of refresh processing for each block;

refresh history determining means for temporarily keeping therein the refresh map signal from the map generating means, referring to history of the refresh map signal and a refresh signal, modifying a value of forced refresh priority indicated by the refresh map signal, and thereby generating a modified refresh map signal;

adaptive refresh signal generating means for referring to refresh priority indicated by the refresh map signal and an allowed number of blocks for refresh processing in a frame to be encoded, selecting a block for refresh processing, and generating the refresh signal specifying the block for refresh processing; and

moving picture encoding means for conducting an intra-frame encoding operation for a block specified by the refresh signal and for appropriately selecting and executing an intra-frame encoding operation or an inter-frame forecast encoding operation for a block not specified by the refresh signal,

3

wherein the refresh history determining means includes a map history memory that refers to the refresh map signal from the map generating means and the refresh signal from the adaptive refresh signal generating means, thereby updating history, beginning at a start of encoding processing, of a refresh map, and storing therein the refresh map.

13. (Previously Presented): A moving picture encoding apparatus for encoding successive input image signals, comprising:

block significance determining means for determining block significance for each block as an encoding unit of the input image signals according to predetermined evaluation indices;

map generating means for generating, according to the block significance, a refresh map signal representing priority of refresh processing for each block;

refresh history determining means for temporarily keeping therein the refresh map signal from the map generating means, referring to history of the refresh map signal and a refresh signal, modifying a value of forced refresh priority indicated by the refresh map signal, and thereby generating a modified refresh map signal;

adaptive refresh signal generating means for referring to refresh priority indicated by the refresh map signal and an allowed number of blocks for refresh processing in a frame to be encoded, selecting a block for refresh processing, and generating the refresh signal specifying the block for refresh processing; and

moving picture encoding means for conducting an intra-frame encoding operation for a block specified by the refresh signal and for appropriately selecting and executing an

4

intra-frame encoding operation or an inter-frame forecast encoding operation for a block not specified by the refresh signal,

wherein the refresh history determining means includes a map history memory that refers to the refresh map signal from the map generating means and the refresh signal from the adaptive refresh signal generating means, thereby updating history, beginning at a start of encoding processing, of a refresh map, and storing therein the refresh map, wherein the refresh history determining means includes:

a refresh signal history memory for storing therein history of the refresh signal; and

a map modifying section for referring to the map history stored in the map history memory and the refresh history stored in the refresh signal history memory and thereby modifying forced refresh priority indicated by the refresh map signal from the map generating means.

Claims 14-26. (Cancelled)